



Public Health Preparedness

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUE?

Acts of terrorism against the United States highlighted weaknesses in the public health infrastructure and its inadequate capacity to respond to catastrophic emergencies. CDC's commitment to enhance the public health infrastructure and improve its capacity to respond to catastrophic emergencies has been steadfast since the September 11th disaster. CDC established the Office of Terrorism Preparedness and Emergency Response (OTPER) to catalyze and coordinate preparedness efforts across the agency shortly after. Later, as part of CDC's Futures Initiative, the Health Systems Work Group recommended in their January 2004, report that "enhancing critical preparedness and response capabilities" should remain top priorities for the agency. Since that time, CDC has identified preparedness as one of two overarching health protection goals under which agency priorities and investments are aligned.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

OTPER continues to provide leadership and oversight for all of the agency's terrorism-related efforts and has recently implemented a goals management process to increase accountability and more closely align budget with performance. Primary program activities that are administered on a routine and ongoing basis enable CDC to:

- Provide funding and technical support to Federal, state, and local preparedness efforts.
- Improve and expand national laboratory response capacity.
- Maintain a Strategic National Stockpile (SNS) of pharmaceuticals and medical supplies capable of delivering these supplies within 12 hours anywhere within the United States and its territories.
- Regulate the possession, use, and transfer of select biological agents and toxin that could pose a severe threat to the public's health.
- Explore and invest in new technologies methodologies to expand and increase the effectiveness of surveillance systems, communication networks, and other data sharing systems.
- Develop, support and invest in preparedness training and educational programs such as the Centers for Public Health Preparedness.

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

OTPER works with numerous terrorism partners from both the public and private sectors (e.g., Department of Homeland Security, Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI), Food and Drug Administration (FDA), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO), Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL), Coalition of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE), hospitals, community agencies, and health care providers,) to integrate and strengthen preparedness activities across all disciplines with a particular focus on emergency response at the community level. Collectively, these activities are advancing our nation's ability to detect, respond, contain and recover from infectious, environmental and terrorist threats in a rapid and effective manner.